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DCI Mr Casper

Bill - I thought  
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might like to  
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Soviet space in  
Afghanistan.

Jim W.

Director

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# Current Soviet Force Structure in Afghanistan (U)

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## **Current Soviet Force Structure in Afghanistan (U)**

**DDB-1100-417-84-SI**

**Information Cutoff Date: 20 October 1984**

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Defense Intelligence Agency

Author:

Frontal Forces Branch,  
Force Structure/Combat Readiness Section

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**TOP SECRET UMBRA**PREFACE

(U) This report presents the current analysis of the ongoing organizational changes to the Soviet forces in Afghanistan. It assists military planners in assessing Soviet capabilities in the region and Soviet ability to tailor forces for specific missions.

(U) The author wishes to thank the following individuals for their assistance and support in the preparation of this document:

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### SUMMARY

(S/WN) The Soviets continue to augment and upgrade their forces in Afghanistan. They introduced a third Special Purpose Forces-associated independent motorized rifle battalion, two new independent security battalions, major elements of an airborne regiment, major elements of a high-frequency direction/finding/radio intercept regiment, three new Su-17 fighter-bomber squadrons, and a mixed helicopter squadron. They converted one tank regiment to a motorized rifle regiment, reequipped the reconnaissance squadron with Su-17, and replaced two squadrons of MiG-21 fighters with a MiG-23 equipped regiment. In addition, motorized rifle and artillery elements have undergone a gradual reorganization increasing both equipment and personnel.

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(S/WN) In addition to forming a third SPF-associated IMRBn at Kandahar, two others redeployed to Jalalabad and Ghazni. The Su-25/FROGFOOT squadron rebased from Shindand to Bagram and one of the new independent security battalions and the new airborne regiment deployed to Kabul. These developments indicate the Soviets plan to concentrate their operations in south-central and southeastern Afghanistan.

(S) The Soviets have selectively augmented and upgraded their forces since 1979, rather than using massive reinforcements. This policy is unlikely to change in the near future.

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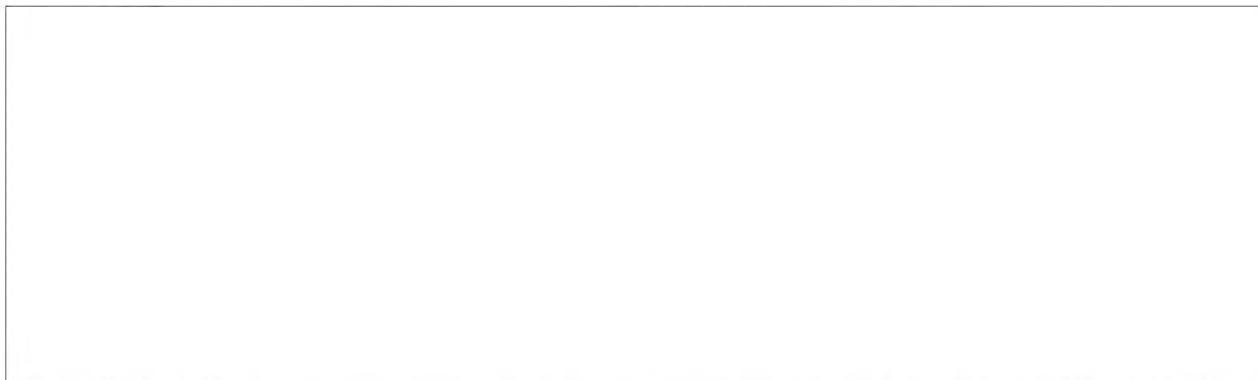
### 1. INTRODUCTION

(S/WN) Since January 1984, the Soviet forces in Afghanistan have been built up incrementally, both by the introduction of new units and by the reorganization of units already in-country. Some units have been withdrawn and others apparently deactivated. In addition, support units of Aviation of 40th Army can be specifically identified on the basis of recent information. The net result is an assessed increase of more than 3,000 Soviet troops in Afghanistan.

(S/WN) In addition to the new or reorganized units, several units have redeployed within the country, indicating that the Soviets are increasingly concerned with combat and security operations in south-central and southeastern Afghanistan.

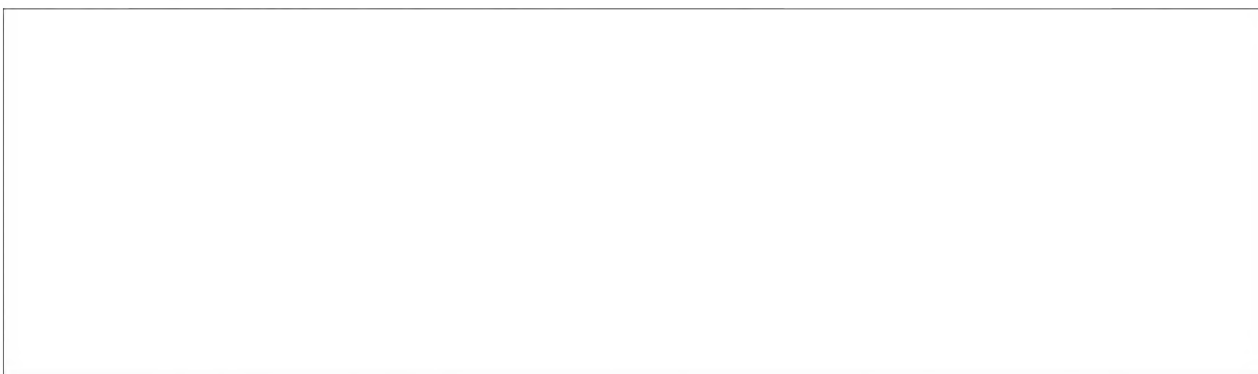
### 2. GROUND MANEUVER FORMATIONS

#### a. New Units



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detailed information, see Soviet Security Units in Afghanistan (U), DIA IAR 5-82 (SECRET), and The Implications of Soviet Security Forces in Afghanistan (U) DIA DDE-2660-71-82-SI (TSCW).



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(S/WN) Airborne Regiment. In April, major elements of one airborne regiment (possibly the 328th Guards Parachute Regiment) of the 104th Guards Airborne Division (GAD) garrisoned at Kirovabad in the Transcaucasus MD arrived at Kabul International Airport (figure 9). The regiment



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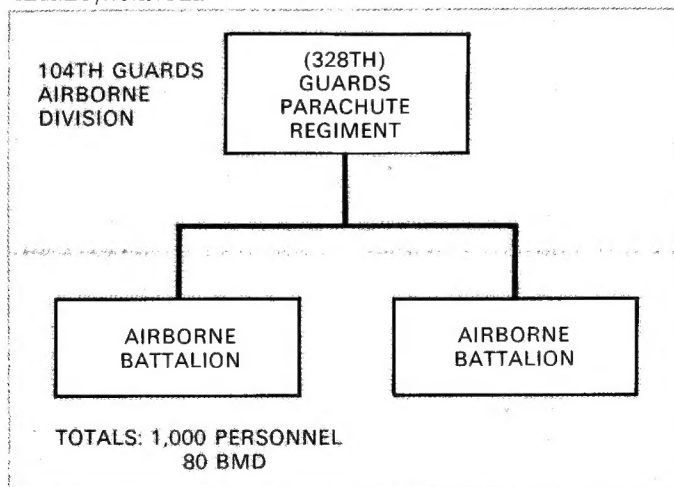
brought its BMDs with it, however, none of the supporting equipment (mortars, ZU 23-2, etc.) was identified (figure 10). The regiment was apparently redeployed to Kirovabad by 10 June. DIA assesses that the regiment was sent to Afghanistan to act as an operational reserve during the Panjsher Valley offensive. This pattern of deployment may be repeated in the future.

**b. Reorganization**

(S) All of the Soviet maneuver units in Afghanistan have undergone significant structural changes since their introduction in 1979. Some of these changes are consistent with the force-wide reorganization of maneuver units, such as the introduction of additional vehicles to motorized rifle battalions. Other changes reflect the operational realities of a counterinsurgency war in extremely rugged terrain, such as the replacement of BMD with other vehicles in airborne/air assault units.

(S/WN) Motorized Rifle Regiments. The BMP- and BTR-equipped motorized rifle regiments (MRR) are now assessed to have 129 BMP or 141 BTR, respectively. This equipment level also has been observed in the forward area groups of forces, and has resulted in a slight increase in strength to crew the additional vehicles. The additional vehicles are primarily weapons platforms for the battalion-level AGS-17 platoon (figure 11) and air defense platoon. BMP-equipped MRR have replaced their towed D-30 gun-howitzers with self-propelled 2S1 gun-howitzers. For the organization of these units, see figures 12-15.

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**Figure 10. (S) Probable Organization of (328th) Guards Parachute Regiment in Afghanistan**

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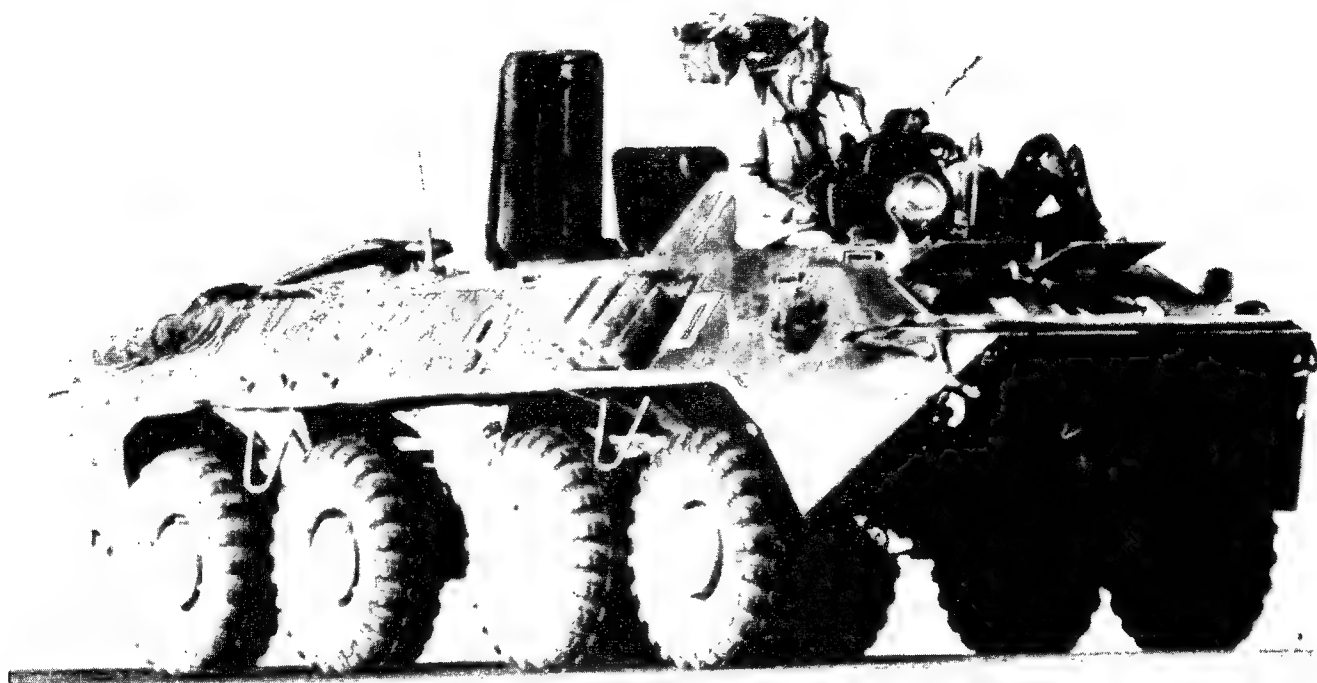


Figure 11. (U) BTR-70 APC with AGS-17 Automatic Grenade Launcher in Afghanistan

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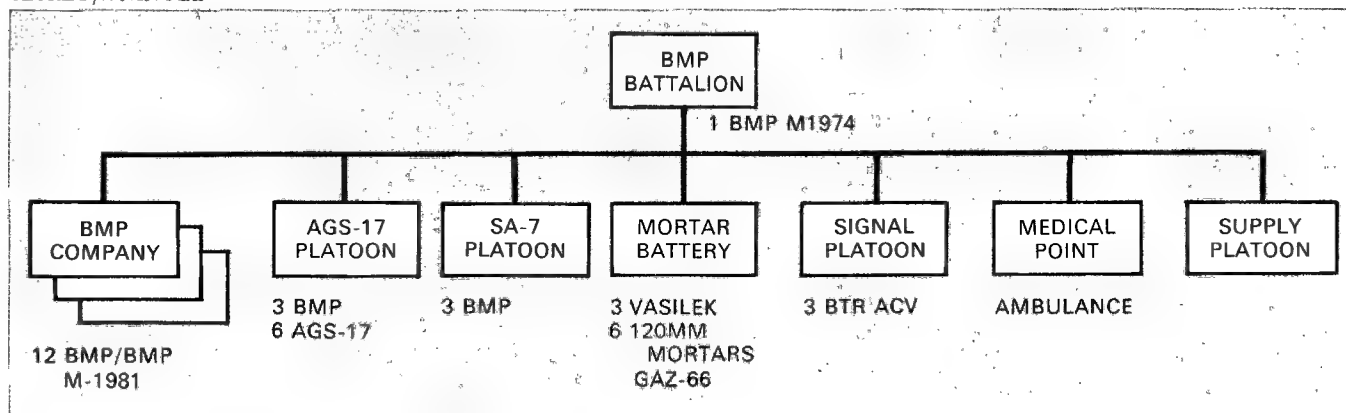


Figure 12. (U) BMP Battalion Organization

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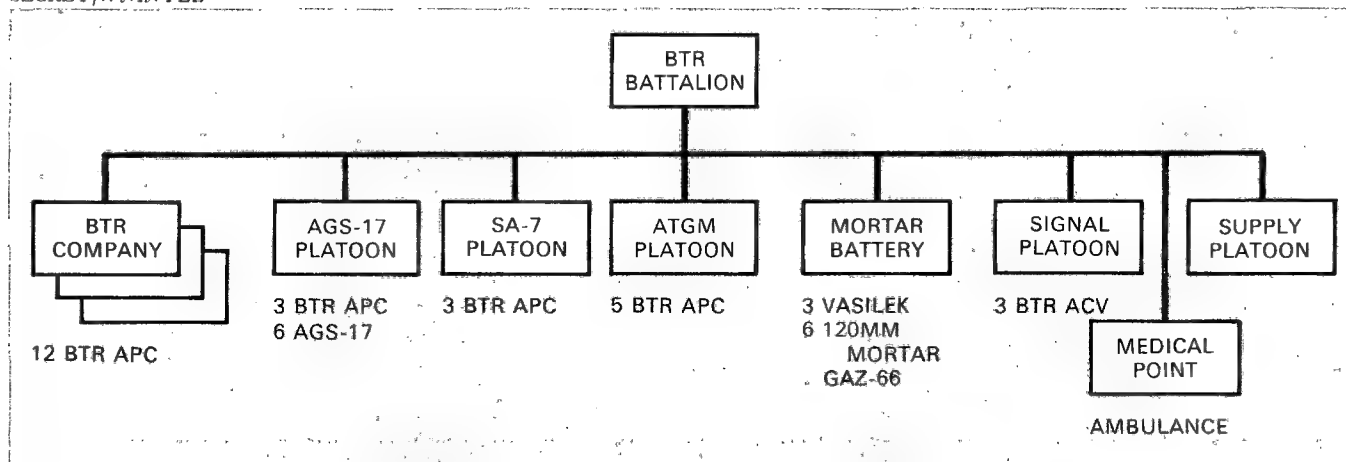
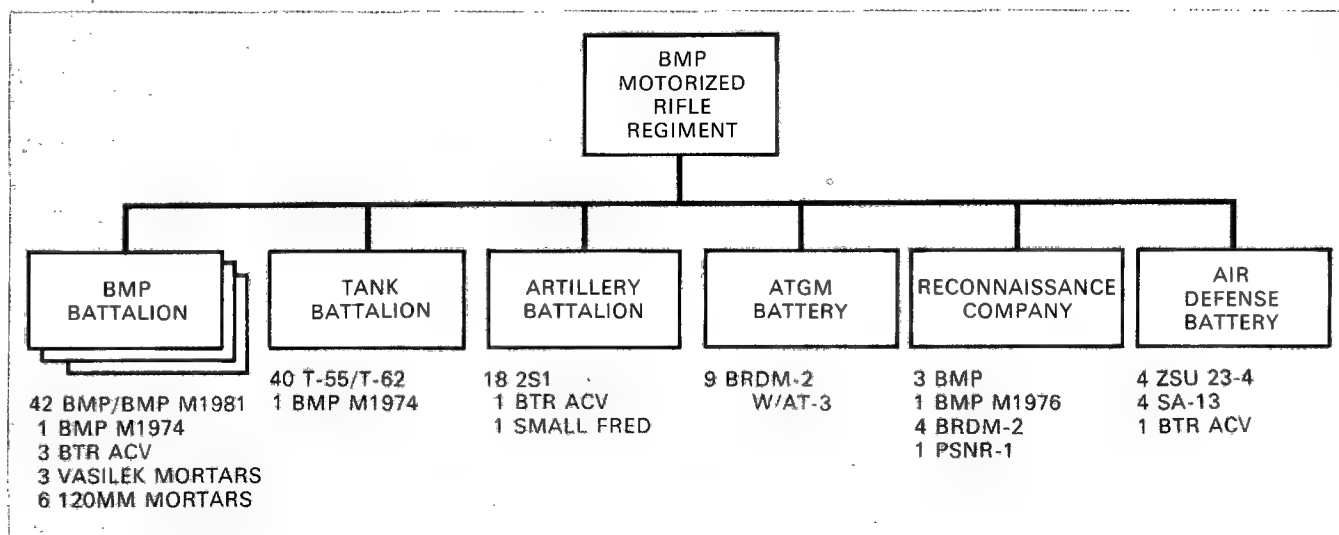


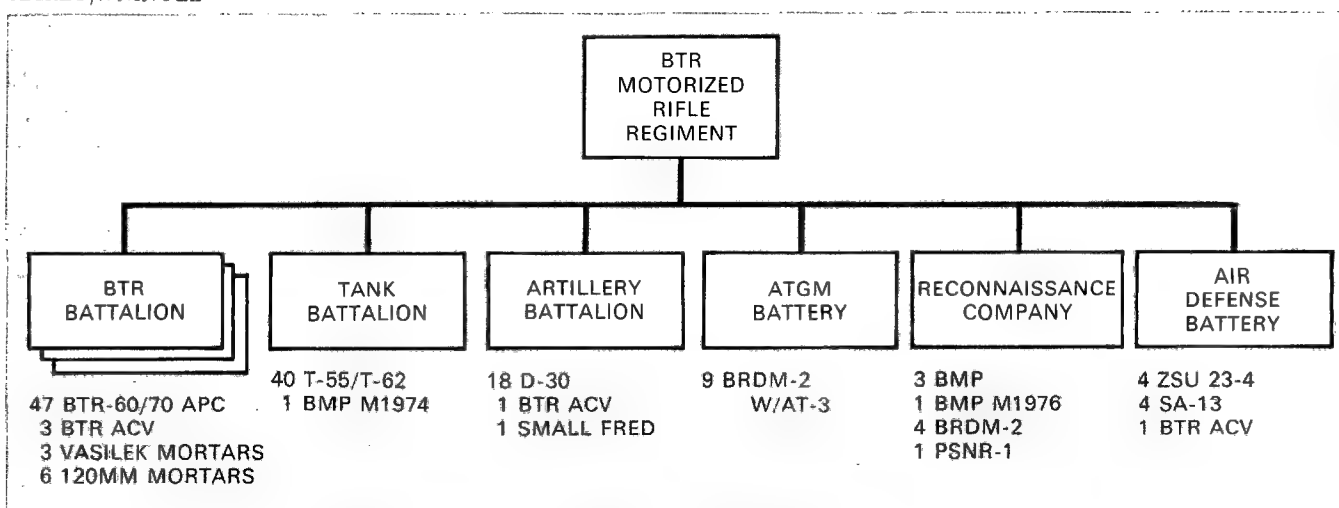
Figure 13. (U) BTR Battalion Organization

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**Figure 14. (U) BMP Motorized Rifle Regiment Organization**

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**Figure 15. (U) BTR Motorized Rifle Regiment Organization**

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(S/WN) Divisional Artillery Regiments. Each of the three MRDs has a unique artillery force structure and demonstrates various mixes of cannon (figures 17, 19, and 20). In each division, the MRL battalion is subordinate to the artillery regiment and the FROG battalion has been withdrawn to the USSR. Recently, each MRD's artillery regiment has been equipped with one battalion of 2S3 152-mm self-propelled (SP) howitzers. During the recent Panjsher operation, the Soviets apparently deployed batteries of eight guns, rather than the normal six-gun units (figure 21).

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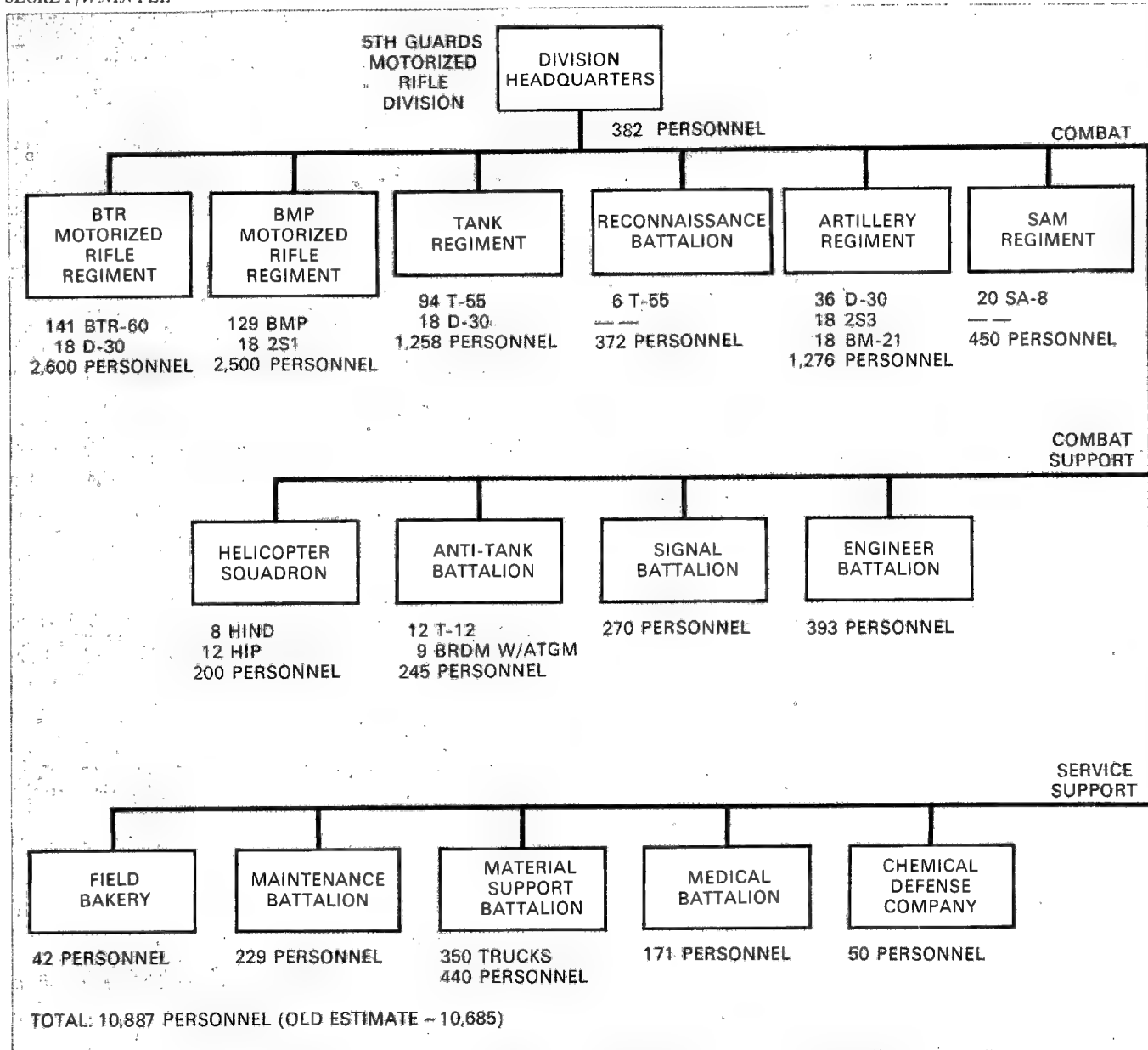


Figure 19. (S) 5th Guards Motorized Rifle Division Organization



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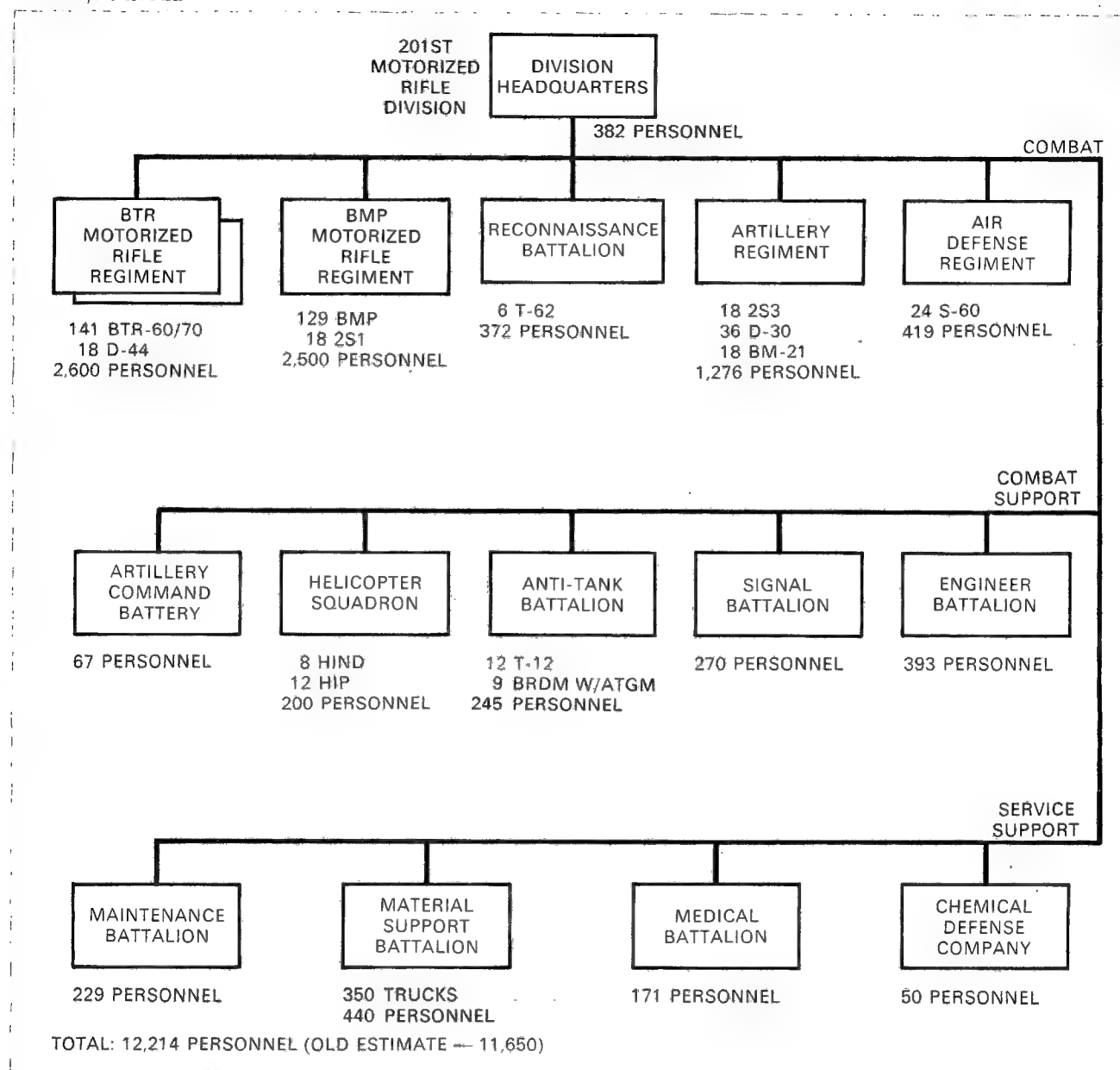


Figure 20. (S) 201st Motorized Rifle Division Organization

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(S/WN) On 26 June, 12 M-1976 nuclear-capable 152-mm field guns were at the Khairabad Transshipment Point (figure 22). Also on that date, 4 M-240 nuclear-capable 240-mm towed mortars were identified in the motor park of the artillery regiment of the 108th MRD at Kabul Deployment Area NW (figure 23).

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(S/WN) Divisional Airborne Battalions. The battalions of the 103d GAD exhibit characteristics atypical for Soviet Airborne units (figure 24). BTR-70 have replaced many BMD (figure 25). One airborne regiment in Kabul was seen to have BMP M-1981 for the first time in June (figure 26). Each of the three Guards Airborne Regiments has one battalion displaced from the regiment. Each regiment has at least one battery of BMD M1981/2 self-propelled gun-mortars. This battery is usually divided into two firing sections, one of which is located with the displaced battalion. In addition, these displaced battalions are often supported by a battery of MRLs, a tank company, and up to a battery of D-30 gun-howitzers, thus providing substantial fire support for these isolated units.

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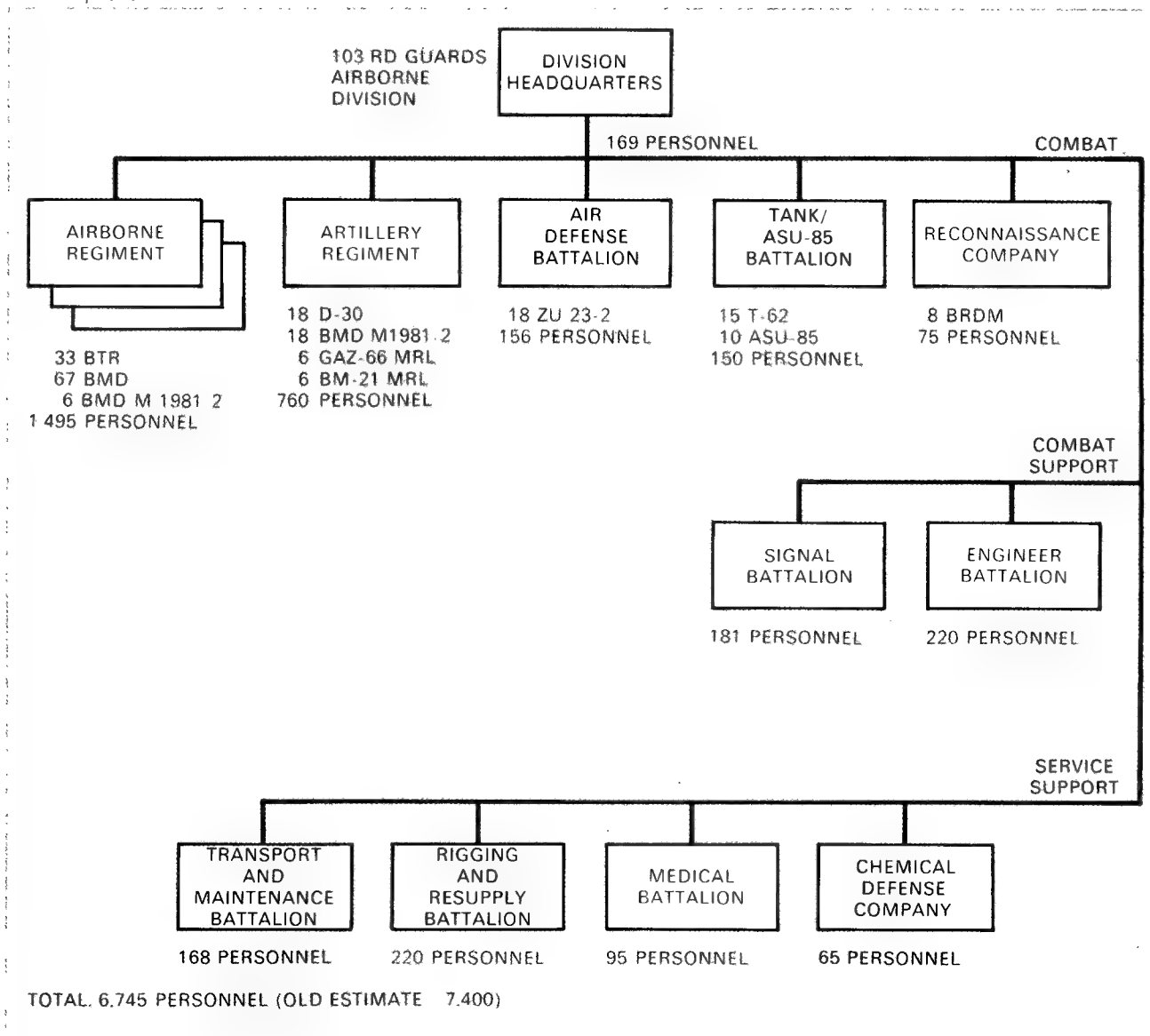


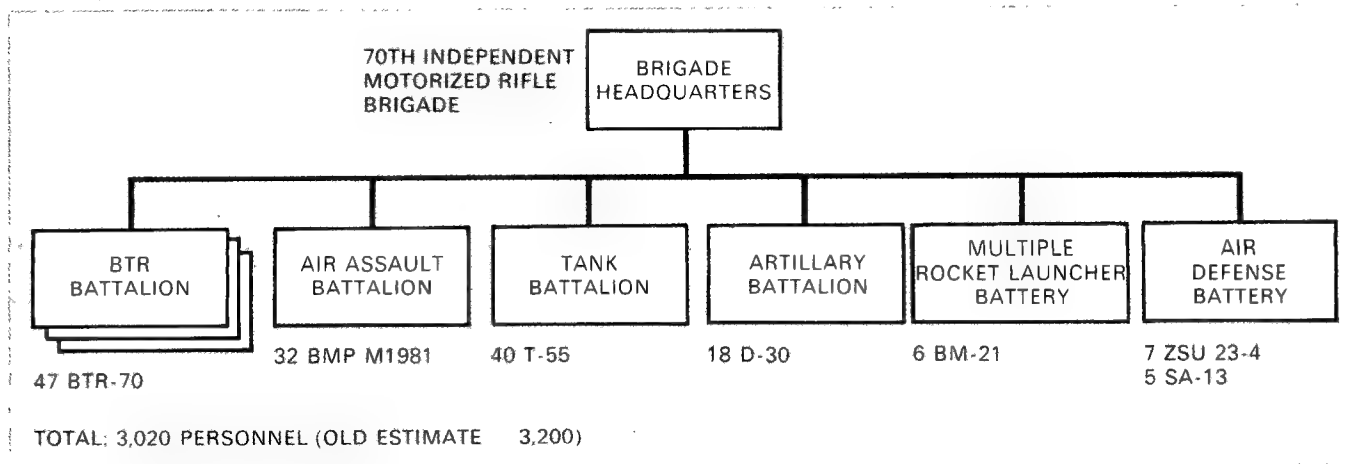
Figure 24. (S) 103d Guards Airborne Division Organization

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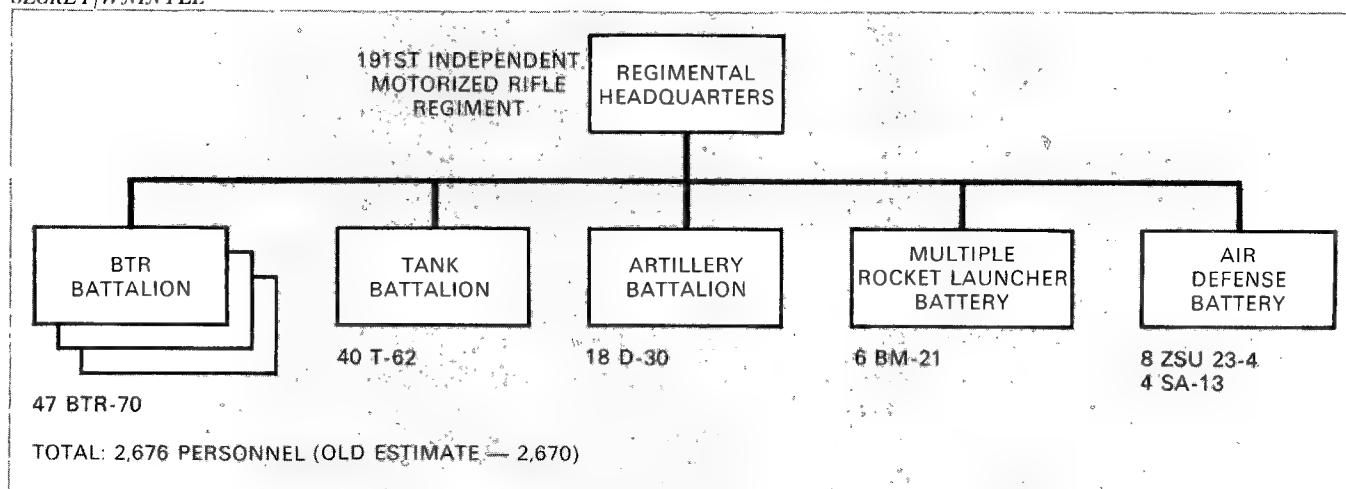
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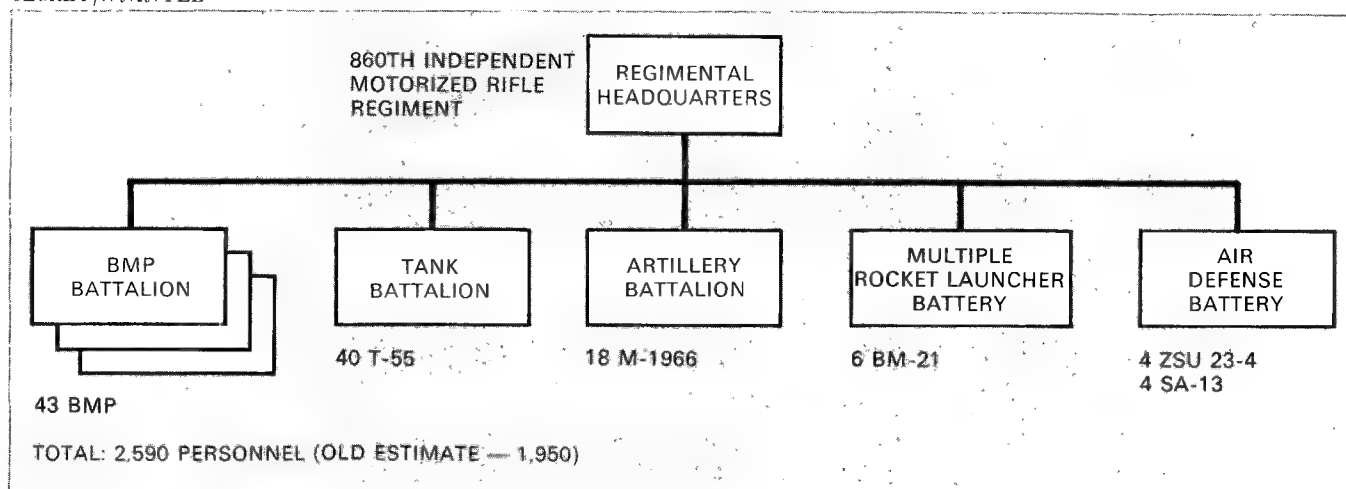
*SECRET;WNINTEL***Figure 28. (S) 70th Independent Motorized Rifle Brigade Organization****TOP SECRET UMBRA**

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**Figure 29. (S) 191st Independent Motorized Rifle Regiment Organization**

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**Figure 30. (S) 860th Independent Motorized Rifle Regiment Organization****TOP SECRET UMBRA**



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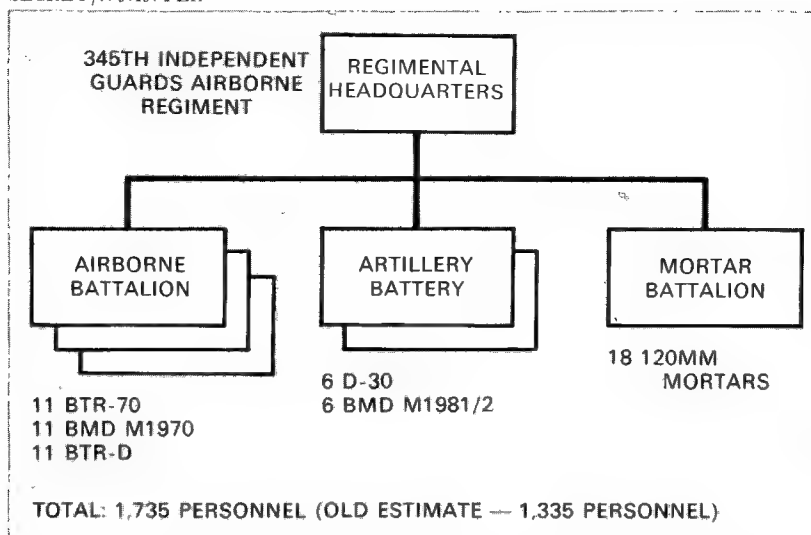
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(S/WN) The 345th Gds Para Regt was formerly subordinate to the 105th GAD and is now operating as an independent airborne regiment subordinate to the 40th Army. It is similar in structure to the regiments of the 103d GAD, but with additional fire support assets (figure 32).

3. AVIATION UNITS OF THE 40TH ARMY

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**TOP SECRET UMBRA***SECRET/WNINTEL***Figure 32. (S) 345th Independent Guards Parachute Regiment Organization**

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(S/WN) Between 19-28 September, a squadron of Su-25/FROGFOOT arrived at Bagram, replacing the 200th Independent Ground Attack Squadron (figure 34), which subsequently departed. The designation of the newly arrived ground attack squadron is unknown.

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(S/WN) Between 12-14 October, a squadron of Su-17/FITTER arrived at Shindand and, between 10-16 October, another squadron of FITTER arrived at Kandahar (figure 35). These are replacement squadrons for the two fighter-bomber squadrons which have been in country for the past year. The designation of these newly arrived fighter-bomber squadrons is unknown.

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### b. Reorganization

(S/WN) The 263d Independent Reconnaissance Squadron was reequipped with Su-17/FITTER in March 1984, replacing the MiG-21/FISHBED (figure 36). FITTER aircraft have a greater capability to locate targets, remain on station longer, and carry a more sophisticated electronics package. The squadron was rebased at the same time from Kabul to Bagram, though the photo processing center remains at Kabul.

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### 4. REAR SERVICE AND SUPPORT

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\* (S) This is not necessarily the same PARM as the Regimental Aviation Repair Facility (Polkavaya Aviatsionnaya Remontnaya\* Masterskaya) referred to in Soviet Air Force Logistics Systems - Supply and Aircraft Maintenance (U), DDB-1300-221-83 (SECRET), pp. 99-100.)

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b. New Units

(S/WN) In April 1984, major elements of a front-level high-frequency radio intercept/direction finding regiment (probably from the Turkestan Military District) arrived at Kabul Deployment Area NW (figure 37). One outstation has been identified at Shindand. These assets are apparently

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excessive for the needs of the campaign against the Mujahideen, and may be targeted at intercepting communications from Iran, Pakistan, or the Indian Ocean.

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### 7. OUTLOOK

(S) In an effort to find more effective ways to combat the Mujahideen, the Soviets probably will continue to refine and adjust their force structure for counterinsurgency warfare. Soviet forces will continue to operate in multi-company and multibattalion, task-organized groups, rather than as regiments, brigades, and divisions. The Soviets have found these larger units to be too inflexible for operations in Afghanistan.

(S) Even after the known unit withdrawals are taken into account, a limited troop augmentation of approximately 3,000 men has already taken place in 1984, and the Soviets may deploy additional airborne units from the Transcaucasus Military District. Since the invasion in 1979, the Soviets have repeatedly increased their forces in small increments. This pattern is unlikely to change unless a decision to provide massive reinforcements were to be made at the highest level. Despite their evident frustration, the Soviets are unlikely to make such a decision in the near term.



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